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NAHANNI

NATIONAL PARK RESERVE



Parks
Canada

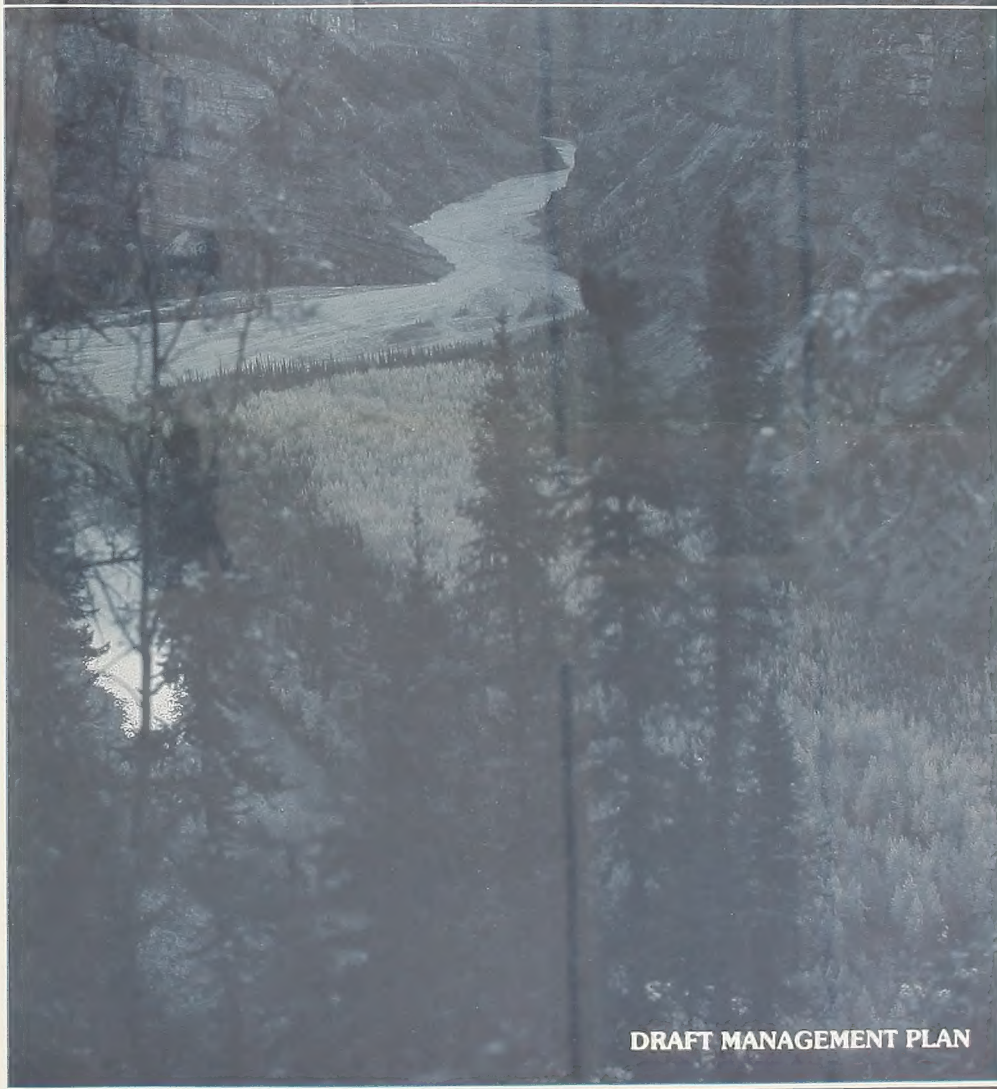
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APRIL 1985

MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROGRAM

NEWSLETTER #5



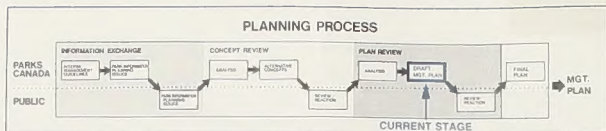
DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN – INTRODUCTION

This newsletter presents the draft management plan proposals for Nahanni National Park Reserve. These proposals are the basis for a management plan that will guide the operation and development of Nahanni for the next ten to fifteen years.

Nahanni has an important and difficult role to meet in the coming years. As a park of world class stature, it is renowned as a World Heritage Site and is internationally known as Canada's premier wilderness river national park. The park plays an important role in preserving rare wildlife and their natural habitats. As a visitor destination, the park provides a type of recreation not readily available elsewhere. Many people have drawn inspiration from Nahanni and more will continue to do so as the park becomes better known and marketed. To regional residents, the park provides a source of income, employment, and opportunity arising from tourism development. All of these facets of the park require careful management to ensure that the park's resources are preserved for future generations so that they in turn may enjoy and benefit by them.

A management plan is a long term commitment to the operation and development of a park in a manner compatible with the Park Purpose Statement and the basic mandate of national parks. The plan sets out the means whereby natural resources are protected. It also details



the type and the extent of visitor services, facilities and recreational opportunities, and the means whereby a park operates to benefit the region in which it is located. Management plans are reviewed in detail every five years to reconfirm the strategies for implementation of the plan, or to make major changes that may be required in the face of a changing regional context (different visitor needs, travel patterns, etc.), or financial constraints imposed on the program.

The planning program is now at its final review stage. At the beginning of the program we asked you to help identify critical issues that should be considered in determining the park's direction. These issues were highlighted in newsletters #1 and #2. Using your comments, briefs and representations from the public meetings, the planning team developed a set of alternatives (newsletter #3) that also fits into the complex resource management relationships of Nahanni and into the overall program responsibilities of Parks Canada.

Your response to these alternatives (detailed in newsletter #4) helped to shape the draft management plan proposal presented in this newsletter. It is considered the best proposal to try to meet the differing viewpoints expressed during the public reviews while also meeting the objectives for the park. It should be mentioned that while the plan proposals are considered the most appropriate treatment for the park following extensive research, analysis and public consultation, certain provisions may be affected by recent government pronouncements on expenditures. As such, mechanisms for implementing plan provisions, as well as timing of developments, may require adjustments subsequent to the review and approval of the final plan by the Minister.

The last round of public meetings will be held shortly after you receive this newsletter and will be based on this plan proposal. Your views will be used to make final adjustments to the plan before its approval by the Minister of the Environment.



The South Nahanni River from a viewpoint on Tlogoshio Plateau.

NATIVE LAND CLAIMS

The 1976 amendment to the National Parks Act set Nahanni aside as a "reserve" for a national park "subject to the settlement of any right, title, or interest of the people of native origin."

The same amendment guaranteed that in the interim before land claims settlement, existing native land uses would be allowed to continue.

The two essential points of this amendment are that lands identified as "park reserves" are subject to land claims and that wildlife resource harvesting activities are allowed to continue subject to the requirement that the park's ecosystem is protected and viable populations of fish and wildlife are maintained. In all other aspects, the National Parks Act applies in the same manner to a "park reserve" as it does for any other national park.

Present native resource harvesting activities are concentrated in the areas east of Yohin Ridge. Moose hunting in the fall and trapping in the winter does not coincide with the primary period of visitor use (June to September).

The management planning program will ensure that no legal risks in the land claims process are prejudiced by recommendations arising from the planning program.

To date, no formal land claims proposal has been tabled for the areas that include Nahanni National Park Reserve.

DRAFT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

AIR ACCESS

Considerations

Public commentary emphasized that air access to the park was essential. However, air flights over the river corridors should be minimized as much as possible. Aircraft disturb park users and detract from their wilderness experience.

Air access is the most practical method of reaching the park. Visitor charters to Nahanni are important sources of business for local air charter firms.

Air access inside the park is essential if a mid-park access point is to be provided for commercial rafting tours and for those who wish to see Nahanni on shorter day trips. Air access to Rabbitkettle Lake and Virginia Falls can be scheduled in such a manner that overnight visitors are not unduly disturbed and so that congestion is avoided.

Recommendations

1. Provisions for air access will be made for drop-off purposes to Rabbitkettle Lake and for drop-off purposes and day-use at Virginia Falls.
2. Parks Canada will discourage "flightseeing" activity over the South Nahanni River corridor to minimize disturbance to river travellers and wildlife populations.
3. Parks Canada will work with the Ministry of Transport to develop air regulations that provide for height restrictions over Nahanni National Park Reserve.
4. Air access for park management purposes, and when required (search and rescue, fire fighting, etc.), will be maintained. However, the general principle of avoiding unnecessary air traffic over the park during the visitor season will be followed. Aircraft use for supplying patrol cabins and for other operations or maintenance purposes will be scheduled to avoid the main visitor season.

5. Parks Canada will work with other land and natural resource management agencies to ensure that, whenever possible, their air access requirements do not coincide with visitation peaks.

6. If necessary, Parks Canada will develop air access schedules with air charter firms to minimize the disturbance to visitors.

7. Air access will continue to be controlled by the Park Superintendent according to the National Parks Act and Regulations.

Rationale

It is important that visitor access to the park be encouraged, but it is also important that it be done in a manner that is compatible with the park's objectives. Aircraft use should be as unobtrusive as possible to other park users.

Since the park section of the South Nahanni River is some 300 km in length, it is considered necessary to provide a



A floatplane loading on the MacKenzie River.



Over Virginia Falls.

mid-park air access point. Combined with air access to Rabbitkettle Lake, these two points provide discrete float-plane landing sites to meet virtually all visitation needs. The mid-park access point is especially important if commercial rafting tours and day visitation is to be successful.

"Flightseeing", scenic over-flights of the park, disturb river travellers and are, therefore, counter-productive to the park's objectives. Experience from other areas (such as Yosemite and Grand Canyon National Parks) show that scenic overflights have become a major controversy and a source of visitor dissatisfaction and conflict. The rationale in support of overflights is that it allows people to see these parks without the commitment for an extended period of stay. However, in Nahanni, the provision of day-use access and facilities at Virginia Falls meets the needs of visitors who desire a shorter period of stay while still giving them a chance to see the premier feature of the park.



At the falls.

DAY-USE

Considerations

Public reaction to the issue of day-use was mixed. Some people felt that day-use in a wilderness setting was inappropriate. Generally, these concerns were associated with fear of incremental facility development and overcrowding. On the other hand, many people felt that by developing a well controlled day-use activity at Virginia Falls, a suitable compromise would be reached. Day-use would separate those who wanted to see Nahanni without the commitment to considerable time or expense from those who wanted an extended trip along the South Nahanni River. Control of day-use facilities and access to ensure a minimum of disturbance to other park users was emphasized.

Day visitation is ideal for many potential visitors to the park who do not have the inclination, time, or sometimes the ability, to take part in an extended overnight visit (for example, the elderly).

Recommendations

1. Day-use will be encouraged and developed for the



The World Heritage Plaque at Virginia Falls.

World Heritage Site at Virginia Falls.

2. Appropriate facilities of a basic and primitive nature will be provided at Virginia Falls for visitor safety purposes and to ensure that the site does not deteriorate because of uncontrolled use.

Rationale

There is a growing number of visitors, in addition to the major park visitor group (that is, the overnight river travellers), who would like to see Nahanni but who do not have either the time or the financial commitment for an extended river trip. For these people, day-use at Virginia Falls will represent an ideal park visit. Virginia Falls is a spectacular feature of international repute and is the prime destination of all visitors in the park. The falls and the immediate surrounding area are an excellent representation of Nahanni as a whole.

Tourism is an important regional industry. The encouragement of day-use at Virginia Falls provides a prime opportunity to take advantage of the fastest growing segment of the package tour market — the wilderness/adventure tour. Such an attraction will be an important feature for air charter firms and other regional businesses that benefit from tourism in the N.W.T.

Since Virginia Falls is already an important air access point for river travellers starting at a park mid-point, the additional air traffic generated by day-use is not expected to have a significant impact.

The falls area has become a natural congregation point in the park for day-users and river travellers, who usually stay an average of two days. Visitors are aware that the area must be shared with other park users at any given time. In addition, when park visitors are briefed beforehand so that their expectations of the area with respect to solitude are not unrealistic, there is little, if any, visitor dissatisfaction. Increased day-use at the falls will not significantly change the experience of overnight visitors, especially if careful site and facilities selection separates these two major visitor groups.

Day-use at Virginia Falls is expected to represent almost fifty percent of total park visitation within the next five years. Encouraging this activity will allow more Canadians to see Nahanni without compromising the wilderness character of the park.

RIVER ACCESS

Considerations

The majority of public comment showed a strong reaction against the development of mechanized travel on the South Nahanni River. At the same time, air access to Virginia Falls was seen as an acceptable compromise to allow visitors to see Nahanni's foremost feature at a reasonable price and without the need to commit several days to an extended river trip.

Compatible tourism development is an important consideration for the local economy that should be encouraged.

Recommendations

1. Non-mechanized forms of river travel are recommended for the South Nahanni and Flat rivers
2. Outfitters will be encouraged to supply a variety of non-mechanized modes of river travel suitable for all age groups and skill levels.
3. The development of more day-use facilities is proposed in the area of Virginia Falls (a) to allow more visitors to see the premier feature of the park, (b) to allow an opportunity for visitors to see the park within a reasonable time and expenditure and (c) to effectively provide for that growing segment of the tourism market which is seeking a world class wilderness experience that cannot be readily found elsewhere. This alternative is seen as a suitable option to mechanized river access for those unable to take an extended river trip.

Rationale

Nahanni was established in 1972 as Canada's premier wilderness river-oriented national park. The park's reputation was further enhanced in 1978 with its designation as Canada's first World Heritage Site, giving Nahanni international stature and reinforcing the strong public sentiment that only those activities compatible with the wilderness character of the Park should be permitted.

Wilderness recreation, especially the adventure/wilderness package tour market, is one of the fastest growing tourism market areas. However, while wilderness recreation is growing in popularity, it also demands careful management to ensure that the very source of the attraction, the wilderness resource, is not compromised. Inappropriate use, or overuse, can diminish the basic attractiveness of a park for wilderness recreation, displacing



The boardwalk at Virginia Falls portage.

potential visitors to less compromised areas. As well, the wilderness resource can be lost to future generations. On the other hand, if visitor use can be properly managed, wilderness areas can sustain a flow of benefits to present and future generations while providing for a growing market in the tourist industry.

It is recommended that river travel be non-mechanized since experience in comparable southern water-based recreation areas, such as Grand Canyon National Park and Boundary Waters Canoe Area in the United States and Algonquin and Quetico Provincial parks in Ontario, show a definite trend towards management for non-mechanized use. It has proven to be the most compatible mode of travel if the wilderness resource is to be maintained.

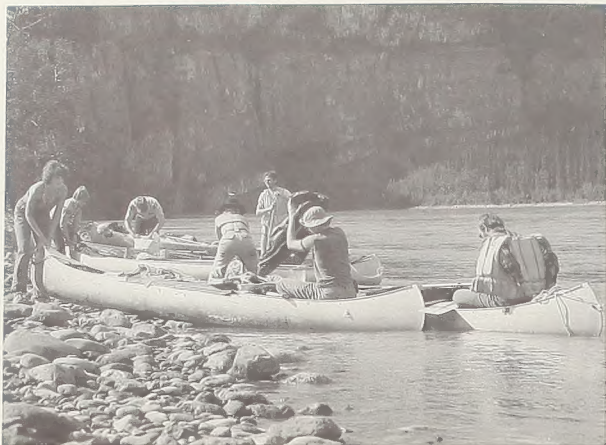
Wilderness management, particularly non-mechanized river travel, does not mean discouraging visitation. In fact, the opposite is true. Wilderness is for people to enjoy. Properly accommodated, access and recreation in wilderness areas can be promoted to encourage virtually every age group and skill level of visitors to participate.

To further elaborate on how visitation is to be encouraged, analysis shows that there are two major groups visiting Nahanni. The first consists of those who have little time to commit to an extended river trip, but who would like to see some of the major park features at a reasonable cost. For these people, Nahanni is just one stop in their overall trip through the Northwest Territories. The second group contains those who have Nahanni as their major destination and are prepared for an extended visit.

The first group, often containing members of packaged tours, would be accommodated through day trips to Virginia Falls. Over the past two years, the number of visitors in this category has shown a seventy percent increase. This is the fastest growing visitor group in the park. As marketing becomes more proficient, and package tour operators become more aware of the opportunities for day visits, even more people will use this means of visiting the park. Since air access to the falls is necessary for river touring as well, the area is a natural congregation point for visitors. Properly designed with appropriate facilities, this development would present minimal conflict with the park's general character. This provision for day visitation allows access to the park at an affordable price and



Rafters on the South Nahanni.



Canoeing near Knaus Hot Springs.

provides an efficient alternative to mechanized river access. Air charter operators and other entrepreneurs in the region can take advantage of these provisions and be into the package tour market. This would be particularly advantageous to entrepreneurs operating out of the Blackstone Territorial Park catering to tourists travelling the newly-opened Liard Highway.

For any visitors wishing to tour through the park, there are existing commercial non-mechanized services available (rafting and canoeing) and more are proposed. These services cater to individuals with a variety of skills and provide a range of totally guided and outfitted services. Rafting outfits, for instance, attract a variety of clients, from families to senior citizens. It requires no special skill or stamina to tour the South Nahanni on some of these fully outfitted tours.

Wilderness recreation is no longer the domain of only the skilled or physically fit. Moreover, on a per diem cost basis, these services are often more economical than mechanized tours.

Outfitters presently operating on the South Nahanni are relying on non-mechanized modes of travel. In addition, mechanized modes of outfitting can be carried on using alternate river areas in the region. The activity does not require the unique setting of Nahanni National Park Reserve.

The long-term compatible tourism development of the area and its preservation objectives can best be met by avoiding conflicting situations between mechanized and non-mechanized travel on the river corridors, and by separating fly-in visitors from river travellers.

Research shows that well-promoted, non-mechanized services can provide access for all visitor groups at competitive rates while retaining the river corridor with its wilderness character. The market remains for the development of wilderness recreation tours. In this manner, both the park purpose objectives are met and a compatible tourism industry is supported. Of paramount importance is the necessity to maintain the wilderness character of the park,

while compatible visitation is encouraged. In short, a well-managed wilderness recreation area is the best solution for Nahanni.

TRAILS AND OFF-RIVER USE

Considerations

Public response showed a strong demand for off-river recreation opportunities. Hiking information is one of the most frequently requested items of pre-visit information. National Parks Policy encourages provision of compatible recreation opportunities for visitors to promote park use. At present, there are no designated hiking trails in the park.

Recommendations

1. Hiking routes will be developed for Hole-in-the-Wall Lake, Marengo Falls/Flat River, and the Nahanni Karst near Lafferty Creek.
2. Trails will be of a primitive standard.
3. The trail to the summit of Sunblood Mountain will be marked (and re-routed if necessary to avoid trail erosion).
4. Information material will be developed for these trails detailing not only basic route information, but also no-impact camping techniques, and any other information required to help ensure a safe visit.
5. No backcountry shelters or campgrounds will be developed.
6. Prior to route lay-out, detailed on-site environmental assessments will be carried out to ensure adequate sight distances, avoidance of fragile terrain, etc.

Rationale

Encouraging off-river travel in Nahanni through selected trail development would make more of the park accessible to Canadians. While the river corridors display exceptional natural features, many park highlights are to be found away from the river.



Camping



Hiking to Secret Lakes.

There is evidence to suggest that trail development would attract more visitors to Nahanni, diversifying the dependence on water-based recreation.

More use of the park's off-river areas would help to alleviate potential congestion at such places as Rabbitkettle Lake and Virginia Falls. Dispersal of visitors, now hesitant to take side trips because of the lack of extended trail developments, will spread visitor use into more areas of Nahanni.

GUIDING/OUTFITTING SERVICES

Considerations

Public feedback favoured the development of non-mechanized outfitter/guiding services in Nahanni.

By setting a pre-determined number of licenced guide services in years past, an artificial market situation was developed whereby new guiding services were unable to take advantage of tourism development opportunities in the park.

Parks Canada's control of the Guide Licence requirements is necessary to ensure adequate standards of safety and reliability.

Recommendations

1. Parks Canada will continue to control guiding in Nahanni National Park Reserve through the use of Guide Licence requirements. No predetermined number of guiding services will be set.
2. Guide Licence applicants will be required to meet existing Government of the Northwest Territories ordinances as a prerequisite.
3. Only non-mechanized modes of guiding services will be licenced to operate in the park.
4. Group size limitations (twenty visitors per party) and scheduling, if required, will be specified on Park Use Permits upon registration.

Rationale

Elimination of the predetermined number of guide services places competition for this commercial activity on the open market. Control and monitoring for prerequisite standards of safety and reliability is retained by the park's Guide Licence testing requirements.

Group size limits will help ensure that commercial operations do not disrupt other visitors or the limitations of low-density primitive facilities.

The non-mechanized methods of access requirements are compatible with the wilderness objectives of the park. Provisions are made for day visitation at Virginia Falls and this is expected to cater to the package tour markets or to those individuals who have neither the time nor inclination for an extended river trip (such as the elderly visitor). Much of the rationale for providing motorized commercial services is met with the development of day visitation at Virginia Falls.

GROUP SIZE AND VISITATION LEVELS

Considerations

In wilderness areas, managing the numbers of people may be as important as any other aspect of park management. One of the fundamental questions arising early in the planning program was "How much use can Nahanni sustain and still maintain its wilderness character?"

Park visitor surveys indicate that there is a definite limit to the visitation that the park can sustain before it is perceived to have compromised its "wilderness character". Analysis of average encounter rates on the South Nahanni River, and visitor responses indicating their own threshold level, suggest that the park can sustain a five to sixfold increase in visitation and still retain the ability to provide a wilderness experience of acceptable quality.

Public feedback showed strong support for the concept of managing Nahanni's visitation levels as indicators of the quality of the park experience.

Recommendations

1. Parks Canada will do periodic visitor surveys and analysis to ensure that the park objectives with respect to the quality of the visitor experience are maintained. These surveys will establish visitation levels that will act as indicators for park managers to assess the amount of use the park receives and how best to manage for it.
2. Visitation levels will be reassessed prior to each five year formal review of the park management plan.
3. Group size limits for the park will remain at twenty visitors per party.

Rationale

These recommendations will provide a definite threshold level for managing the parks' "wilderness experience" objectives, allowing park managers to reassess the amount of use the park receives and how best to manage it.

Many people felt that twenty visitors per party was too large a group size for a park such as Nahanni. However, adoption of the proposed group size limits will allow existing commercial guiding operations to maintain their viability. These limits are also comparable to those used in other parklands managed for wilderness recreation purposes and they have been found to provide a realistic guideline.

FACILITIES

Considerations

Public response generally held the view that only those facilities necessary to promote resource protection or to facilitate a primitive type of recreation should be encouraged so that the park's wilderness atmosphere is maintained.

Maintenance of even primitive facilities in remote areas such as Nahanni can be costly.

Day visitors to Virginia Falls are people of diverse backgrounds, ages and abilities. Some of these people may be elderly and will require a greater degree of protection and ease of access and circulation around the falls area as compared to river travellers.

Some primitive facilities may be required to protect the natural environment (for instance, boardwalks protecting fragile vegetation around Virginia Falls Portage).

Recommendations

1. Facilities in Nahanni National Park Reserve will be kept to a minimal and primitive standard in keeping with the park's wilderness character.
2. The existing primitive (no services) camping facilities will be maintained at Rabbitkettle Lake, Virginia Falls, and Kraus Hot Springs. An additional primitive campground is proposed for the South Nahanni River at Rabbitkettle Portage.
3. No off-river backcountry trail shelters or campsites are recommended.
4. Facilities to accommodate and encourage day visitation will be developed at Virginia Falls (access path, promontory/viewpoint, pit privies, picnic area).
5. There will be no commercial facilities (accommodation or services) developed in Nahanni National Park Reserve. All such facilities will be encouraged for development in existing communities outside the park.
6. Existing primitive camping facilities (fire grates, picnic tables, etc.) at locations other than the ones mentioned above, will be removed from the river corridors.
7. All existing portages and warden cabins will be maintained to suitable standards.

Rationale

Facilities in Nahanni are few and primitive in nature. Provisions for designated camping (designated sites, pit privies, food cache platforms, fire rings, etc.) will be made at Rabbitkettle Lake, Rabbitkettle Portage on the South Nahanni River, Virginia Falls, and Kraus Hot Springs. Designated camping areas are necessary because of the concentrated and repeated use these sites receive.

The designated day-use area at Virginia Falls is proposed to accommodate the expected growth in day visitation at this World Heritage Site. Visitors participating in day tours require a separate area from overnight travellers camping at the falls. The different needs of day visitors (in contrast to self-contained and well prepared river travellers) involve the provision of additional, albeit minor, facilities (picnic area, promontory viewpoint, access paths, pit



Visitors at Deadman Valley

privies). Provision of a designated access path and promontory viewpoint is also a significant contribution to visitor safety at the falls, as well as a necessity to ensure that the fragile vegetation and discontinuous permafrost in the area is avoided.

Most of the river corridors and all the off-river backcountry areas require non-designated no-impact camping. For this reason, no backcountry shelters or campgrounds will be built. This type of unfettered use is a hallmark of wilderness-oriented parks such as Nahanni.

ADMINISTRATION & OPERATIONS CENTRE LOCATION

Considerations

It is essential that an operational presence be maintained near the eastern park boundary so that the resource protection and visitor safety objectives of the park can be met.

Recommendation

1. The Fort Simpson Administration Centre will be retained as the year-round administration facility for the park.
2. The Nahanni Butte Warden Station will be relocated to the Nahanni Butte village side of the river and redeveloped as a seasonal facility to be manned during the visitor season. Permanent staff will be relocated to Fort Simpson during the off-season months. The station would be designed for use on an "as and when needed" basis for periodic patrol and monitoring purposes year-round.

Rationale

Relocation from the present site of the Nahanni Butte Warden Station is inevitable because of river erosion and periodic flooding. The village side of the river presents a stable site for a station. Moreover, there is access to power and an airfield. Not having to duplicate these two essential requirements will result in considerable cost savings.

Nahanni Butte village would benefit from the added use of these existing services. Villagers have expressed a desire to see Parks Canada facilities located near them to add a degree of permanence and diversification to their community.

The manning of the new station on a seasonal basis, with permanent staff located year-round at Fort Simpson, would be a more cost effective mode of operation. Considering that fiscal restraint is likely to continue, park operations must respond by becoming more efficient. Since visitation is concentrated seasonally, presence of on-site staff should be correspondingly concentrated. During the off-season months, the station can be used on an "as and when needed" basis for purposes of boundary patrols, monitoring for poaching, or other enforcement or resource conservation related concerns.

The presence of the Fort Simpson Administrative Office provides an important link with the regional community. Since other federal and territorial agencies dealing with land management relevant to Nahanni are located at Fort Simpson, it is important to maintain a Parks Canada presence.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Considerations

Fire management in the park should be as compatible as possible with fire management outside the park so that management efforts in one area are not counterproductive to that in an adjacent area.

Fire management must take into account areas of traditional native use and harvesting as well as the proximity of settlements.

Fire suppression is extremely expensive in remote settings. Absence of roads, long distances from air charter bases and rugged topography all contribute to the high cost of suppression.

Recommendations

1. Parks Canada will continue to manage fires in Nahanni



Existing group campground



The Nahanni administration office at Fort Simpson.



Nahanni Butte

National Park Reserve in accordance with the fire management agreement with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Under this agreement, a small area east of Yohin Ridge will be classified as a "sustained attack zone" with all fires being actioned. The remainder of the park will be classified as an "observation zone" where intervention is warranted only in special circumstances (for example, public safety, protection of major facilities, serious adverse effects on adjacent lands, etc.).

2. A fire management plan will be developed, as part of the overall park conservation plan, that will describe fire management details in the park.

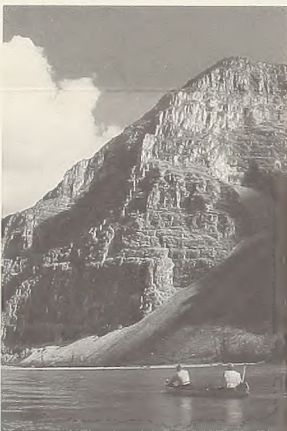
Rationale

The proposed fire management scheme for Nahanni takes into account the various concerns of the region and the realities associated with fire management and suppression.

The area east of Yohin Ridge, where most of the native resource harvesting activity is concentrated, is designated a "sustained attack zone." All fires in this area (for reasons of native harvesting activity and because of the proximity of a settlement) are suppressed. The rest of the park area is an "observation zone" where naturally caused fires are permitted to burn, provided that special circumstances do not warrant intervention.

Fire is a normal, integral, and cyclic component of the boreal forest. Most fires affecting the park originate from lightning strikes. Vegetation cycles dependent on fires are important to provide good habitat for wildlife. Imbalances in the natural fire cycle, resulting from man's intervention, could alter the mix and proportions of vegetation communities, and subsequently, the relative abundance of wildlife species.

Considering the social, economic, ecological, and jurisdictional factors involved, this proposal is considered the most suitable for Nahanni National Park Reserve.



Third Canyon

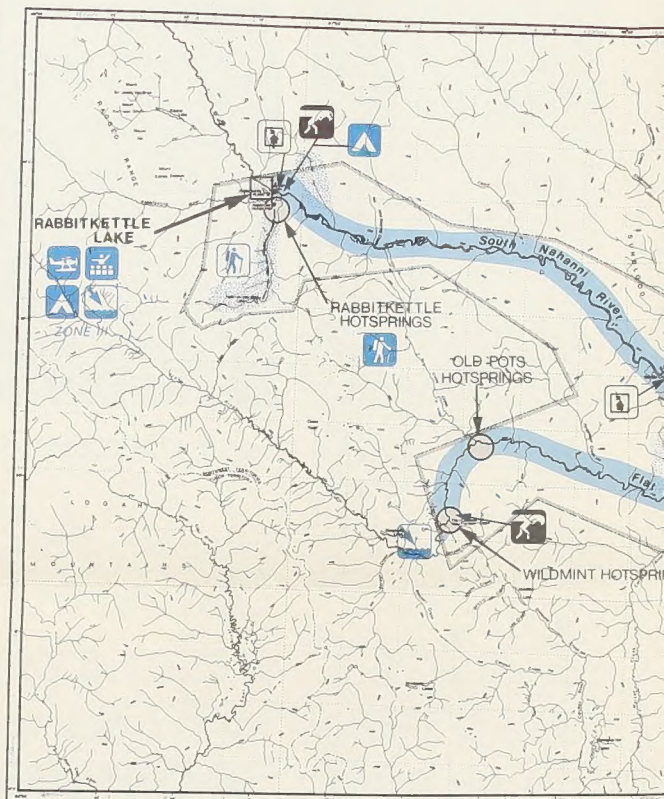
BOUNDARIES

Considerations

Nahanni was established in the early 1970's before detailed information on the area was available. The park has since been found to provide insufficient protection for three key regional resources that are required to make Nahanni truly representative of the Mackenzie Mountains. These are representations of the Ragged Range, the Nahanni Karst area, and the Tlogotsho Plateau.

General public reaction to the issue has been strongly supportive of boundary changes to the park. Conservation groups have been pursuing the issue for over a decade. Since land claim settlements in the region are still to be negotiated, no initiative can compromise the eventual settlement of those claims or the traditional rights of native peoples. Any new lands used for park purposes would also be covered under the "park reserve" amendment

NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK RESERVE



MAP 1. DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN.

ZONING: (PLEASE REFER ALSO TO MAP 2, PAGES 10,11)

- ZONE I. SPECIAL PRESERVATION AREA
 - ZONE II. WILDERNESS
 - ZONE III. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
- THERE ARE NO ZONE IV OR V AREAS.

RIVER CORRIDOR USE:

- NON-MOTORIZED USE COMMERCIAL & PRIVATE
- ACCESS TO RIVER
- DESIGNATED CAMPGROUND
- PORTAGE

* DAY-USE FACILITIES:

- PROPOSED & ASSOCIATED
- VIEWING
- PICNICKING
- DOCKING & AIRCRAFT

of the National Parks Act which guarantees specific native rights and activities pending settlement of land claims. There are private entrepreneurs, such as hunting outfitters, with an economic interest in some of the areas proposed for park purposes. Such interests will be acknowledged and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner through open consultation and negotiation.

This region of the Mackenzie Mountains is heavily mineralized. It is important that lands identified for park purposes be screened for economic mineral concentrations so that such lands are not unnecessarily included since the National Parks Act precludes mining.

The process of establishing revised boundaries will extend well beyond the period of this planning program because of the complexity of issues and interests involved in such an effort. The park management planning process itself is a convenient vehicle for such initiatives because of the broad public airing this program allows.

Recommendations

1. Parks Canada proposes the continued initiative of seeking boundary adjustments to Nahanni National Park Reserve in the area of the Nahanni Karst, Ragged Range and Tlogotsho Plateau.



ITIES:
TORY
AND AMENITIES
NT
REA
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OTHER CODINGS:



WARDEN CABIN



GUIDED TOUR



TRAIL



AIRCRAFT ACCESS/
'DROP-OFF'



AREAS PROMOTED FOR OFF-RIVER
USE/TRAVEL PENDING ASSESSMENT



NEW TRAIL DEVELOPMENT



NOTE: ALL EXISTING PORTAGES AND
WARDEN STATIONS ARE RETAINED.

LEGEND

WATER ELEVATION IN FEET	POINT COTE IN FEET
WATER AND STREAM	WATER OF NAHANNI
INTERMITTENT STREAM	CHAMBER DRAINAGE
SAND GRAVEL OR MUD	CHAMBER DRAINAGE
LAKE	LAKE
SHOAL	SHOAL
ROAD	ROAD
RAILROAD	RAILROAD
PARK BOUNDARY	MONITORING ON MAP



- Public consultation will be carried out by Parks Canada at the local, regional and territorial level through co-ordination with the Government of the Northwest Territories.
- Private interests in affected lands peripheral to Nahanni will be dealt with through consultation with the interests involved.
- Prior to withdrawing lands for park purposes, Parks Canada will ensure that a mineral assessment of those lands is completed so that known mineral concentrations are excluded.
- Consultation on boundary changes will involve liaison

with Dene representatives. The "park reserve" clause of the National Parks Act would apply to any lands affected by boundary changes such that existing native rights, or future native land claims settlements, would not be compromised by this initiative.

Rationale

The recommendations for continuing the boundary initiatives reflect the strong public call and support for revision of the park's boundaries to make Nahanni a better representative park of the region. Provision is made for negotiations, where necessary, for

private interests in affected lands. Consultation with the Government of the Northwest Territories and Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and native representatives will ensure that everyone will be given an opportunity to comment and consult on boundary changes.

Those lands finally proposed for inclusion into the park will have been screened for economic mineral presence to exclude areas of high development potential.

The addition of world recognized features such as the Nahanni Karst, will add significantly to the park's importance in natural heritage conservation. In addition, the tourism appeal of the park will be enhanced.



Tufa (calcium carbonate deposits) at Wildmint Hot Springs (above) and Rabbitkettle Hot Springs (below).



RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Management Objective

To protect and manage both the terrestrial and aquatic natural resources of Nahanni to ensure the perpetuation of resources basic to the park, allow natural processes to proceed uninhibited by man's activities, and balance the dual mandate of preservation and use while ensuring visitor safety.

Resource Management

Resource management in Nahanni consists basically of the protection of special preservation areas (as outlined in the section on zoning) and the monitoring of major wildlife species. The remote nature of the park and the relatively little wildlife harvesting that takes place means that disruption of natural resources is negligible. This allows park managers to leave natural processes to continue unhindered.

Resource conservation is guided by the Park Conservation Plan. This Conservation Plan contains objectives and strategies for the protection and management of the park's resources. It defines natural resource problems, purposes actions and presents a prioritized plan for implementing them.



Dall's Sheep



Canada anemone.

Public Safety

Ensuring public safety will involve the provision of pre-trip information and guidance to visitors so that they can become aware of the skills required, and the hazards involved, in wilderness recreation in Nahanni. In this way, people can assume the onus of responsibility for their visit. Management intent is to promote self-reliance on the part of visitors and to minimize the monitoring of visitor activity. Nevertheless, a basic capability to assist visitors in distress will be maintained.

Enforcement

Enforcement in Nahanni involves protection of the park resources against deprecative behaviour (vandalism, poaching, littering, etc.) by enforcement of the National Parks Act and Regulations. To help minimize enforcement related incidents, user education programs for pre-trip and on-site use will be developed for visitors. Management intent will be to minimize the presence of park personnel in line with the area's wilderness objectives while maintaining a sufficient enforcement capability.

Recommendations

1. Resource Conservation will initiate the Park Conservation Plan upon approval of the Park Management Plan.
2. Parks Canada will develop an informal committee with representatives of the Government of the Northwest Territories to deal with wildlife management in the Nahanni region for the purposes of information exchange, research, monitoring and wildlife survey co-operation.

VISITOR SERVICES

Management Objective

To provide appropriate and compatible recreation opportunities for the public to visit, appreciate, understand and enjoy the resources of Nahanni National Park Reserve.

Orientation/Reception

Information will be made available to visitors concerning the nature of activities, opportunities, facilities and services available in the park. Visitors to Nahanni will receive information to make them aware of the nature of the park and the requirements involved to ensure a safe visit. The primary mechanism for contacting visitors prior to their park trip will be through the requirement for overnight registration. Self-reliance through preparation for visiting the park will be stressed.

Facilities

Facilities will be consistent with the wilderness management objectives of the park such that (a) facilities, where and if required, will be primitive in nature and will encourage a low density of use, (b) facilities required for park visitor purposes or park management purposes will be as unobtrusive as possible to preserve the wilderness appearance of the river corridor and (c) no commercial facilities or park administration facilities will be located in the park.

Services

There are no commercial services available in Nahanni National Park Reserve. Parks Canada will encourage private sector involvement in the provision of services that provide compatible and approved access to and circulation within the park reserve. These include such things as air charter access, day visitation and the provision of guiding and outfitting services. Commercial services such as stores and accommodation facilities will be encouraged to develop in existing centres outside the park.

Activities

Nahanni National Park Reserve will promote visitor use that complements the natural resource management objectives of the park by encouraging those activities which are dependent on the park's natural resources, require a minimum of man-made facilities and require self-reliance on the part of the visitors.



Visitors registering at Rabbitkettle Warden Station.

INTERPRETATION

Management Objective

To develop a communication program for Nahanni National Park Reserve, compatible with the park's wilderness river corridor, that provides opportunities for the public to learn about and appreciate the resources of the park, provides pre-trip information, meets resource protection objectives and emphasizes the World Heritage designation of the park.

Interpretation is a significant component of the management planning program. Management intent is to design a program that increases the public's understanding and appreciation of the park. At the same time, interpretation must be accomplished in ways that do not compromise the park's wilderness resource. Consequently, all in-park interpretation except for Rabbitkettle Hot Springs will be through self-guiding approaches. Visitors, with the help of guidebooks and pamphlets, can interpret the park features for themselves.

Regardless of the eventual management plan chosen for Nahanni, the park will remain a relatively remote place that the majority of Canadians will never see firsthand. To enable these people to develop an awareness and appreciation of the park, mass media techniques such as film, exhibits and slide presentations will be used to tell the story of Nahanni.

Recommendations

1. Parks Canada will develop a detailed guidebook for Nahanni suitable for both pre-trip preparation and an in-park river guide.
2. Exhibits and slide programs will be developed for presentation at locations such as the Blackstone Territorial Park on the Liard Highway and at the Nahanni National Park Headquarters in Fort Simpson.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Management Objective

"Parks Canada will seek to integrate elements of the Parks Canada system with surrounding regions so as to have a positive social, economic and physical impact." (National Parks Program Policy).

Regional integration is a Parks Canada commitment to consider a national park's management and operations in the context of the surrounding region. In areas such as wildlife management, watershed protection, resource harvesting and tourism, it is necessary to maintain an open and mutually beneficial co-operation with regional interests.

In the case of Nahanni, several aspects of the park's operation and management involve regional considerations. Some of the main issues are highlighted here although the concept of regional integration is an on-going commitment to open dialogue. Through co-operation with local, regional and territorial agencies and representatives, Nahanni will continue to provide a flow of benefits to the region it represents.

Fire Management

Parks Canada's agreement with Northern Affairs Program (D.I.A.N.D.) concerning forest fires in the park is designed to ensure a compatible approach to forest fire management in the region.

Wildlife Management

Parks Canada will work to develop an informal committee with representatives of the Government of the Northwest



Yellowknife, capital of the N.W.T.



Guided tour at Rabbitkettle Hot Springs.

Territories to deal with wildlife management in the Nahanni region. Since wildlife habitats and movements often cross administrative boundaries, it is essential that such a mechanism be developed for purposes of information exchange, monitoring, research and wildlife survey co-operation.

Regional Resource Development

In order to accomplish Parks Canada's goal of ensuring that there is "no measurable change in baseline levels of water quality at the park boundary from developments in the South Nahanni watershed", Parks Canada proposes the following:

- (a) to develop an agreement with Inland Waters Directorate to produce baseline water quality data for the park against which water quality may be monitored in the future;
- (b) to work with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to establish the Mackenzie Mountains as a priority for regional planning; and
- (c) to represent the park's best interest on the Technical Review Committee of the N.W.T. Water Board for projects affecting the South Nahanni watershed.

Co-operation and liaison with regional land management agencies will help meet the goals for carefully integrated land management in the South Nahanni watershed.

Tourism Development

Tourism is an important industry providing economic benefits to the N.W.T. economy.

Parks Canada will co-operate with federal and territorial tourism development agencies by providing information and guidance on the visitation and tourism opportunities that Nahanni presents.

While not specifically charged with a tourism promotion mandate, Parks Canada is committed to co-operation with agencies responsible for tourism promotion so that advantage may be taken of the appropriate tourism opportunities and markets presented by a park's presence.

Boundary Reviews

Parks Canada will continue to pursue boundary changes for Nahanni National Park Reserve. To ensure proper regional involvement, Parks Canada will work with D.I.A.N.D. (the federal land manager outside Nahanni) and the Government of the Northwest Territories through the Federal/Territorial Lands Advisory Committee.

Parks Canada will also develop a mechanism and schedule for contacting public and private regional interests to provide them with a forum for responding to Parks Canada's boundary proposal.

ZONING

Zoning is an important tool in land management. It reflects not only the operational approach to specific park areas, but also a public commitment of Parks Canada to manage with specific objectives in mind.

Public comments for zoning suggested that if the park was to have wilderness objectives these must be reflected in the zoning plan.

The extensive use of zone IV (Outdoor Recreation) areas in Nahanni in years past was strongly opposed. Zone IV areas were seen as being incompatible with the park's purpose and objectives. There were fears that zone IV areas would encourage incompatible park use and over-development.

Zoning does not constrain traditional native harvesting rights as guaranteed by the "park reserve" amendment of the National Parks Act. In Nahanni, these traditional uses are permitted. This corresponds to the National Parks Policy on zoning which specifies that "the park zoning plan will accommodate such activities."

RECOMMENDATION

Zone I - Special Preservation

Specific areas or features which deserve special preservation because they contain or support unique, rare or endangered features or the best examples of natural features. Access and use will be strictly controlled or may be prohibited altogether. No motorized access or man-made facilities will be permitted. (National Parks Policy)

Seven special preservation areas are recommended for zone I status. These sites have been recognized as being particularly sensitive for reasons of fragility, importance to wildlife or by nature of their rarity or uniqueness. Access to and use of these areas is carefully controlled or even restricted to ensure their protection.

1. Rabbitkettle Hot Springs

This site contains two tufa mounds (primarily calcium carbonate) formed by thermal springs. Water (at 21°C) flows from the top of these mounds spreading outwards to form an intricate series of terraces. These mounds are particularly sensitive to trampling. Open access, even the most well-intentioned, would lead to premature erosion of the site. However, guided access will continue to be provided by the warden stationed at Rabbitkettle Lake to give visitors a close-up look at one of the park's major features.

2. Grotte Valerie

The Valerie cave system comprises 430 metres of linked passages inside the north wall of First Canyon. Formed by the dissolution of limestone, these inter-connecting "solution passages" are the finest caves

yet discovered in the region. Safety hazards (ice and rock falls), remains of ancient sheep skeletons, and the fragile features of ice and frost galleries are factors that preclude open public access. Without extensive facility development and on-site supervision, the caves cannot sustain visitation.

3. Wild Mint Hotspots

These hotspots are located approximately 100 km upstream of the South Nahanni on the Flat River. The tufa walls of the hotspots are brittle and crumble easily. While there are no extensive mound formations such as at Rabbitkettle, an abundance of wildlife and unusual vegetation species point out the special management care required for preservation.

4. Old Pots Hotspots

Old Pots Hotspots on the Flat River is located opposite the river's confluence with Irvine Creek. Extensive tufa deposits and large pools (or "pots") are the predominant features of these springs. The springs have cooled and it appears as though little if any calcium deposition has taken place in many years. The existing deposits are extremely fragile. They cannot sustain any visitation.



Deadmen Valley

5. Deadmen Valley Sheep Licks

These mineral outcrops, or "licks", are located along the South Nahanni River edge near the eastern end of Deadmen Valley. They are frequented by Dall's sheep and other animals seeking salt and other mineral nutrients, as well as by predators (wolves, bears) in search of prey. The sensitivity of mammals to visitor disturbance at licks is unknown.

6. Sand Blowouts

Located just inside the southeastern boundary of the park, the Sand Blowouts are made of finely textured sandstone which has been wind eroded into many unusual shapes. Curved arches, rounded pillars and perfect sandstone nodules are found in a small area of three to five hectares. Some of these sandstone features are easily eroded and susceptible to trampling. Access to the area must be strictly controlled.



Sand Blowouts

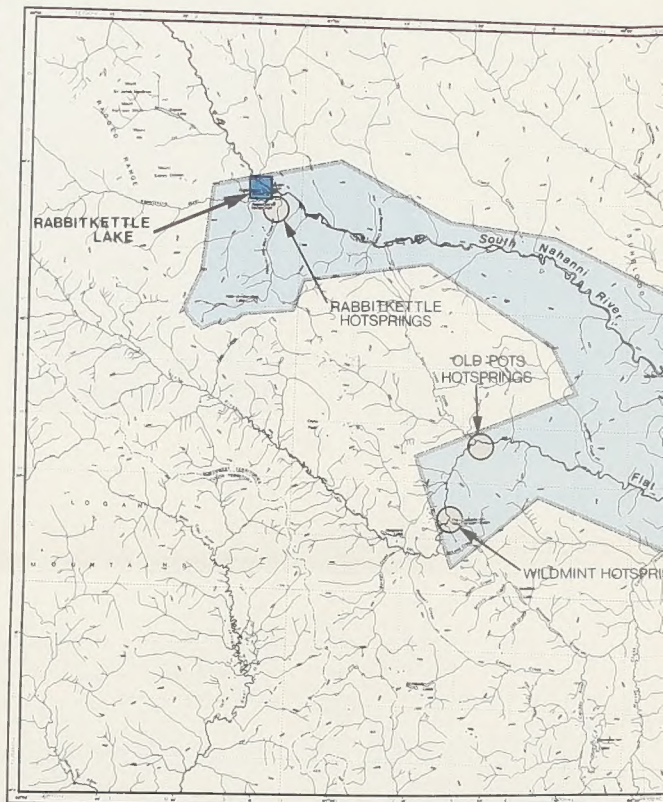
7. Yohin Lake

This lake near the eastern park boundary is the largest lake in the park and is an important nesting area for various bird species including the rare trumpeter swan. The diversity of aquatic vegetation, and the abundance of nesting waterfowl and other birds make Yohin lake especially interesting in the context of the park as a whole and give an added rationale for zone I status.

Zone II - Wilderness

Extensive areas which are good representations of each of the natural history themes of the park and which will be maintained in a wilderness state. Only certain activities requiring limited primitive visitor facilities appropriate to

NAHANNI NATIONAL PARK RESERVE



MAP 2. ZONING.

- ZONE I. SPECIAL PRESERVATION AREA**
 - ZONE II. WILDERNESS**
 - ZONE III. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**
- THERE ARE NO ZONE IV OR V AREAS.**

a wilderness experience will be allowed. Limits will be placed on numbers of users. No motorized access will be permitted. Management actions will ensure that visitors are dispersed. (National Parks Policy)

The majority of the park is zoned wilderness. This status is recommended for the entire South Nahanni and Flat River corridors with the exception of an area immediately above Virginia Falls zoned for aircraft access and day-use, and for Rabbitkettle Lake.

The significance of this zone application on the majority of the travelled portion of the park is that it reflects Parks

Canada's commitments to manage the park as a wilderness-oriented area. The extent of the zone is also an acknowledgement of a clear public call to manage Nahanni along the lines of a zone II defined wilderness. Zone II status fits most closely with the Park Management Objectives and the Park Purpose Statement.

Zone III - Natural Environment

Areas that are maintained as natural environments and which can sustain, with a minimum of impairment, a selected range of low-density outdoor activities with a



LEGEND

SPOT ELEVATION IN FEET
 RIVER AND STREAM
 INTERMITTENT STREAM
 SAND GRAVEL OR MUD
 LAKE
 TOWN
 ROAD
 AIRPORT
 PARK BOUNDARY

LEGENDE

POINT COTE EN PIED
 RIVIERE ET RUISSEAU
 COURSE D'EAU INTERMITTENTE
 SABLE GRAVIER OU BOULE
 LAC
 VILLE
 ROUTE
 AERODROME
 FRONTIERE DU PARC



minimum of related facilities. Non-motorized access will be preferred. Access by public transit will be permitted. Controlled access by private vehicles will only be permitted where it has traditionally been allowed in the past. (National Parks Policy)

Zone III designation is proposed for Rabbitkettle Lake and for Virginia Falls. The designation is in keeping with the activities proposed for the area.

The facility developments proposed for Virginia Falls and Rabbitkettle Lake are primitive, low-density facilities. The

intent of the recommendation is to provide for air access and either day or overnight visitation within a discrete area. Incremental development of these areas must be precluded if the natural environment appearance of these sites is to be maintained. It is for this reason that zone III designation is considered appropriate.

Zone IV – Outdoor Recreation

Limited areas that can accommodate a broad range of education, outdoor recreation opportunities and related facilities in ways that respect the natural landscape and

that are safe and convenient. Motorized access will be permitted and may be separated from non-motorized access. (National Parks Policy)

There are no zone IV areas proposed.

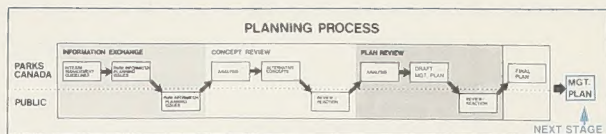
Zone V – Park Services

Towns and visitor centres in certain existing national parks which contain a concentration of visitor services and support facilities as well as park administration functions. Motorized access will be permitted. (National Parks Policy)

There are no zone V areas proposed.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The planning program for Nahanni is now in the Draft Management Plan review stage. The draft presented in this newsletter is the result of information analysis and public comments received during the review of the Planning Alternatives in newsletter #3. In a few weeks you will have the opportunity to express your opinion of this document during the final round of public meetings. The dates and locations for these will be advertised shortly. If you are unable to attend these meetings or if you prefer to make your comments in writing, please fill out the comment card which has been inserted for your convenience. No postage is necessary if mailed in Canada. Please remember that your suggestions and opinions are important. They will be considered when the draft is re-evaluated and a final Management Plan is prepared and submitted for approval to the Minister responsible for Parks Canada.



It is not too late to add your name to our mailing list. Also, if you would like back issues of our news-

letters or if there is additional information you require, please contact:

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 Winnipeg, Manitoba
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National Parks
 Centennial



Centenaire des
 parcs nationaux

1885-1985

100 years of Heritage Conservation

Canada's first national park was

established in 1885 at Banff, Alberta.

Today there are national parks and

national historic parks in every province

and territory. The National Parks

Centennial is an occasion to renew our

commitment to preserve examples of

our heritage unimpaired for the benefit

of all Canadians.



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Canada



HERITAGE RIVER NOMINATION

Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories have recently agreed to participate in the new Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS). Rivers included in the CHRS will continue to be owned and managed by the federal, provincial, or territorial government having jurisdiction in a way that will ensure that their distinctive heritage values are protected. The national park segment of the South Nahanni River has been nominated as a Heritage River.